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## Involuntary 'Guinea Pigs' 'Highly Unlikely' Now

Local health officials agreed today that it is highly unlikely that a medical experiment could be conducted now in which patients weren't told what was being done to them and the risks involved.

They were commenting on the recent revelation that Strong Memorial Hospital was one of four hospitals taking part in secret government medical experiments between April, 1945, and July, 1947.

The experiments' purpose was to determine the effect of plutonium, a poisonous, radioactive substance, on workers manufacturing the atomic bomb.

In the experiments, about 12 persons here who were believed to be terminally ill were injected with plutonium. None of the dosages was large enough to be lethal, said Dr. William F. Bale, a professor of radiation biology and biophysics at the University of Rochester and the administrator of the program, and, in fact, they were only one-tenth the dose which would be dangerous (cancer forming).

He said the patients were "probably told they were part of a scientific project and would be injected with something harmless which would contribute to our scientific knowledge . . . They were probably told that it would be an act of patriotism to take part."

While Dr. Bale never remembers talking to any of the patients, he doubts that they were ever told they would be given a radioactive substance.

His recollection of the experiment is

strictly by memory. He sent all his records of it to the Atomic Energy Commission last year in preparation for his retirement.

Dr. J. Lowell Orbison, dean of the UR Medical School and director of the Medical Center, said that such an experiment would be impossible today because of federal regulations.

Under Health, Education and Welfare regulations which went into effect several years ago, any person involved in experiments must be told what is being done to him, any risks that he is taking and the fact that there may be unknown risks. A form must be signed agreeing to the experiments.

A committee, composed of medical personnel and laymen (such as lawyers and clergymen), reviews all experiments to see that the law is followed.

If a hospital is found to have violated the law, it could face the elimination of all federal grants, which are an important source of funding for UR.

In addition, the State Health Department adopted a "Patient Bill of Rights" last fall which has basically the same protections for patients. Violations can result in the loss of Medicaid funds.

"Duplication of this experiment today would be impossible unless the federal laws were changed to allow exceptions," said Dr. Orbison. "There might have been other similar experiments here in the past, but none that I know about."